

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Central District of California

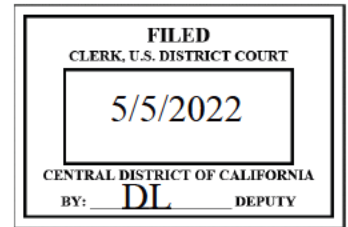
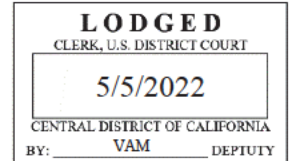
United States of America

v.

JOHNNY ROMO,

Defendant

Case No. 5:22-mj-00278-DUTY

**CRIMINAL COMPLAINT BY TELEPHONE
OR OTHER RELIABLE ELECTRONIC MEANS**

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date of December 12, 2021 in the county of San Bernardino County in the Central District of California, the defendant violated:

Code Section

18 U.S.C. § 1951(a)

*Offense Description*Interference with Commerce by
Robbery

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

Please see attached affidavit.☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

/S/

Complainant's signature

Stephen J. May, Special Agent

Printed name and title

Attested to by the applicant in accordance with the requirements of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by telephone.

Date: 05/05/2022

Rozella A. Oliver

Judge's signature

City and state: Los Angeles, California

Hon. Rozella A. Oliver, U.S. Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

AFFIDAVIT

I, Stephen J. May, being duly sworn, declare and state as follows:

I. PURPOSE OF AFFIDAVIT

1. This affidavit is made in support of a criminal complaint and arrest warrant for JOHNNY ROMO ("ROMO") for violations of 18 U.S.C. § 1951(a) (Interference with Commerce by Robbery). ROMO is currently in custody at San Bernardino County Jail.

2. The facts set forth in this affidavit are based upon my personal observations, my training and experience, and information obtained from various law enforcement personnel and witnesses. This affidavit is intended to show merely that there is sufficient probable cause for the requested complaint and does not purport to set forth all of my knowledge of or investigation into this matter. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, all conversations and statements described in this affidavit are related in substance and in part only.

II. BACKGROUND OF AFFIANT

3. I am a Special Agent ("SA") with the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") and have been so employed for the past 22 years. From September 1999 through December 2003, I primarily worked as a Bank Robbery Investigator in the San Francisco Division of the FBI. From December 2003 to the present, I have worked as a Bank Robbery Investigator in the Los Angeles Division of the FBI. And since May 2005, I have also been the Bank Robbery Coordinator in the Los Angeles Division of the FBI.

4. As a Bank Robbery Investigator and Bank Robbery Coordinator, I investigate bank robbery cases assigned to me and review, analyze, and disseminate investigative data (including bank surveillance photographs) on nearly all bank robberies that occur in the Central District of California. Since May 2005, there have been more than 3,500 bank robberies in the Central District of California.

5. Since October 2013, I have also been the lead FBI Agent for the San Gabriel Valley Violent Crime Task Force, which works in conjunction with Task Force Officers from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to investigate commercial and retail robberies.

6. On February 27th and 28th of 2014, I received basic training (Cellular Survey Analysis and Geo-location) from the FBI Cellular Analysis and Survey Team, which included utilizing cellular tower logs to identify a subject phone or phones of different crimes, even when it was not clear whether a cell phone was in use during the commission of the crime. I have also analyzed tower dump data sets and historical cell site data sets for my own FBI cases and other local police departments' investigations on a number of occasions.

7. On September 8, 2020, I completed the ZetX E-learning eight-hour (self-paced) training course - "Forensic Analysis of Cellular Networks." The course provided a detailed instruction on cellular technologies operating in the United States. The history of cellular technologies, the different technologies used in cellular networks, and mapping considerations associated

with the networks were thoroughly covered. Additionally, there was an introduction to drive-test techniques (network survey), equipment overview, and how to map and analyze drive test data. The course concluded with instruction about how to present forensic call detail mapping evidence in court.

8. On November 4 and continuing through November 6, 2020, I virtually attended and completed the ZetX WEXA training conference. The WEXA Conference brought together Historical Cell Site Location Information Subject Matter Experts from across the nation to present criminal investigations and shared investigative approaches. In addition, the WEXA conference covered Long Term Evolution technology, Radio Frequency exposure, real-time location data, cellular technology updates, and drive-test surveys.

9. In connection with the bank robbery and commercial/retail robbery investigations in which I have participated, I have used a variety of investigative techniques, including witness interviews, speaking with law enforcement agents and officers, reviewing surveillance images and cellular telephone data, and reviewing physical evidence. As a result of this experience and my conversations with other law enforcement personnel, including FBI Special Agents and local law enforcement detectives who were experienced with commercial robbery investigations, I am familiar with the methods used by individuals to commit commercial robberies as well as effective investigative methods used to solve them.

III. SUMMARY OF PROBABLE CAUSE

4. Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other law enforcement agencies, are investigating a series of robberies, consisting of approximately 18 commercial/retail robberies in the Central District of California between December 4, 2021 and January 23, 2022. Based on information set forth below, law enforcement has identified ROMO as one of the suspected robbers.

5. Specifically, as detailed further below, in his post-arrest interview, ROMO admitted his involvement in the robbery conspiracy. Law enforcement recovered from ROMO's primary residence a large rifle-style BB gun and certain items of clothing consistent with what ROMO used during several of the robberies. Law enforcement has identified, and previously charged, a conspirator who is linked to ROMO, was with at the time of his arrest, and based on social media videos was with ROMO shortly after several of the robberies.

IV. STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE

A. Four Armed Robberies on December 12, 2021 (Hesperia, Victorville, and Adelanto)

6. On December 12, 2021, the following four commercial businesses were robbed:

a. At approximately 3:33 p.m., the Bear Valley Smoke Shop, located at 14875 Bear Valley Road, Hesperia, California ("Robbery 1");

b. At approximately 5:45 p.m., the VV Smoke Shop, located at 14516 Seventh Street, Victorville, California ("Robbery 2");

c. At approximately 6:03 p.m., the Red Dragon Smoke Shop, located at 11965 Cactus Road, Adelanto, California ("Robbery 3"); and

d. At Approximately 10:50 p.m., the Sky Liquor Store, Located at 14793 Bear Valley Road, Hesperia, California ("Robbery 4").

7. I have read the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department ("SBCSD") reports related to each of these four incidents. Based on my review, I learned the following:

1. Robbery 1 - The Bear Valley Smoke Shop

8. Victim/employee J.R. observed the first suspect walk inside the store wearing all black. The first suspect looked at the bongs on the east side of the store. This first suspect asked J.R how much a bong was. The first suspect got on his phone and appeared to call or text someone. Approximately thirty seconds after J.R. told the first suspect the cost of the bong, a second suspect walked into the store. The second suspect approached J.R. and pulled out an AK-47 style rifle and pointed it at J.R.'s chest and face area. The second suspect told J.R., "You know what to do." J.R. realized he was being robbed. J.R. saw a third suspect outside the store who appeared to be acting as a lookout for the other two suspects. While the second suspect pointed the gun at J.R.'s face, the first suspect jumped over the counter and started to take the merchandise

behind the counter, including bongos and blunt wraps. The second suspect asked for the money inside the cash register and J.R. gave the second suspect the money.

i. Based on J.R.'s recollection and the review of the video by law enforcement, the first suspect was a Hispanic male, 5'07 to 5'09", between 18 to 21 years old, and 150 pounds. The second suspect was a Hispanic Male, 6'00" to 6'01", between 18 to 21, and 170 pounds. The third suspect was a Hispanic or Black male, between 5'10" to 6'00", and between 18 to 20 years old, and approximately 200 pounds. All three suspects wore some type of facial covering.

ii. The robbers took \$180 in currency, a glow jar, gravity bongos, and a box of blunt wrappers.

2. Robbery 2 - VV Smoke Shop

9. Victim/employee W.A. saw a first suspect enter the smoke shop. W.A. assisted the first suspect. The second suspect and the third suspect walked into the smoke shop shortly after the first suspect entered. The second suspect approached W.A. and pulled out a firearm from underneath his sweater. The second suspect pointed the firearm at W.A. The second suspect demanded W.A. give him all the money in the register. The third suspect stood by the entrance to the store. W.A. gave the second suspect the money from the register. The first suspect jumped behind the glass counter and grabbed two large hookah bongos. The second suspect walked toward W.A. and had a knife in his hand. They tried to open a second cash register, but it would not open. W.A. was scared when the second suspect pointed

the firearm at W.A., but W.A. did not believe second suspect would shoot W.A.

i. W.A. described the first suspect as a Hispanic male, 18-20, 5'09", and 160 pounds; the second suspect as a white male, 5'08", 160 pounds; and the third suspect as a black male, 25, 6'00", and 200 pounds.

ii. The robbers took \$400 in currency, two white hookah bongs.

10. SBCSD collected several latent prints from the robbery. The latent fingerprints were collected from the glass counter where the first suspect jumped behind the glass counter. As set further below, two of these fingerprints were found to be a match with codefendant RIGOBERTO HERNANDEZ ("HERNANDEZ").

3. Robbery 3 - Red Dragon Smoke Shop

11. Victim/employee F.A. saw the first suspect walk into the store. The first suspect was talking on a cell phone. The first suspect looked at items in a glass case near the back of the store. The second suspect walked into the store and stood near the first suspect in back of the store. F.A. walked around the counter to ask if they needed any help. The second suspect pulled out a black rifle from underneath his sweatshirt. The second suspect grabbed the top of the rifle near the charging handle, presumably to load a round into the chamber of the rifle. The gun made a metal locking sound. The second suspect demanded F.A. give the second suspect the money form the register. F.A. complied and handed the second suspect money from the cash register. The first suspect then jumped over the

counter near the back of the store and grabbed several "gas masks" and bongs. The third suspect stepped into the doorway of the store as the first suspect finished putting items into the second suspect's backpack. The third suspect said something to the other suspects. All three then left the store.

a. Employee J.B. provided video to SBCSD who reviewed the video. J.B. told SBCSD that in the video, prior to the robbery, a Chevy Suburban SUV with chrome wheels parked near the Liquor Store, next to the Red Dragon Smoke shop. Three individuals exited the SUV and walked toward the Red Dragon Smoke Shop at approximately 5:57 p.m.

b. The robbers took \$1,000 in currency.

4. Robbery 4 - Sky Liquor Store

12. Victim/employee N.S stated that two suspects entered the store through the sole entry and exit door to the store. N.S. could only remember that both suspects were wearing black clothing and facemasks. The first suspect walked around the counter and began taking alcohol bottles from the shelf. At this time, the second suspect pointed a rifle at N.S. and walked closer to the counter. The second suspect demanded N.S. give him all the money from the register. N.S. was scared of being shot, so N.S. complied and gave the second suspect all the cash from the register.

i. Law Enforcement reviewed the video from the robbery. The video shows the suspects drove into a Panda Express parking lot. They were driving a tan/gold SUV. The video also showed the rifle to be an all black AK-47 rifle.

Based on the video, the first suspect is a Hispanic Male, approximately 5'09". The second suspect, who held the AK-47 is either a Hispanic or white male, approximately 5'09".

ii. The robbers took four Hennessy alcohol bottles, two gray goose vodka bottles, and \$700 in currency.

B. Additional Robberies Under Investigation

13. Including the four robberies discussed above, law enforcement believes ROMO and HERNANDEZ to be the robbers in the fourteen robberies, which have a similar or identical modus operandi, clothing, similar vehicle, and/or consistent appearance of the suspect:

- a. December 4, 2021, 4:20 p.m., Big 5 Sporting Goods, 17542 Hawthorne Boulevard, Torrance, California;
- b. December 6, 2021, 6:15 p.m., Big 5 Sporting Goods, 8990 Knott Avenue, Buena Park, California;
- c. December 6, 2021, 6:42 p.m., Big 5 Sporting Goods, 15254 Rosecrans Avenue, La Mirada, California;
- d. December 6, 2021, 7:58 p.m., King Smoke Shop, 8024 Stewart and Gray Road, Downey, California;
- e. December 20, 2021, 6:03 p.m., Discount Mart, 4829 Paramount Boulevard, Lakewood, California;
- f. December 20, 2021, 6:44 p.m., Amsterdam Smoke Shop, 5521 South Street, Lakewood, California;
- g. December 20, 2021, 7:00 p.m., Craft Smoke Shop, 10450 Artesia Boulevard, Bellflower, California;
- h. December 20, 2021, 7:23 p.m., Cora's Market, 16109 Norwalk Boulevard, Norwalk, California;

- i. **December 20, 2021**, 7:35 p.m., Vape Street, 17510 Pioneer Boulevard, Artesia, California;
- j. **December 28, 2021**, 4:20 a.m., 7-Eleven, 10454 Artesia Boulevard, Bellflower, California;
- k. **December 30, 2021**, 8:34 p.m., King Smoke Shop, 8024 Stewart and Gray Road, Downey, California;
- l. **December 30, 2021**, 9:23 p.m., Arco Gas Station, 4385 Atlantic Boulevard, Long Beach, California;
- m. **January 4, 2022**, 11:40 p.m., Eddie's Liquor, 5401 Cherry Avenue, Long Beach, California; and
- n. **January 5, 2022**, 12:00 a.m., Pit Stop Liquor, 17811 Lakewood Boulevard, Bellflower, California.

14. ROMO is believed to be one of the robbers in each robbery. The robberies were generally similar in nature, including a similar description of the robbers, similar clothing worn, and a similar rifle used during many of the robberies.

C. Identification of RIGOBERTO HERNANDEZ As a Co-Conspirator

- 1. Robbery Vehicle - GMC Yukon Registered to HERNANDEZ

15. A large gold SUV was seen in Robbery 3 and Robbery 4. A license plate reader analysis was conducted for the date and time of the robberies. The license plate 8KQB272 was seen in Victorville (the general location of Robbery 3) and Hesperia (the general location of Robbery 4) at the time and date of the robberies. That license plate, which corresponds to a gold GMC Yukon, appears to match the description of the vehicle seen in surveillance video at the locations of Robbery 3 and Robbery 4

(in Victorville and Hesperia, respectively). A Chevrolet Suburban, as described in Robbery 3, appears similar to a GMC Yukon.

a. Notably, the GMC Yukon, license plate 8KGQ272, is registered to "RIGOBERTO HERNANDEZ," at 1029 E. Artesia Boulevard, Long Beach, California. The Yukon was found parked across the street from this address on December 14, 2021 at 2:18 a.m.]

2. Latent Print Belonging to HERNANDEZ

16. As described above, several latent prints were obtained from the December 12, 2022 robbery of the VV Smoke Shop, 14516 Seventh Street, Victorville, California (Robbery 2), on the glass counter where the suspect jumped over the counter. These latest prints were sent to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Scientific Investigations Division for analysis.

a. Two of the latent prints contain one or more impressions of value for identification. Two of the latent prints contain no impressions of value for comparison.

b. As a result of a comparison to candidates retrieved from the Automated Fingerprint System, two latent impressions from the December 12, 2021 robbery have been identified to HERNANDEZ.

3. Post Miranda Interview of HERNANDEZ

17. HERNANDEZ was arrested on January 25, 2022 and was interviewed by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Task Force Officer Mark Yzabal. Law enforcement officers read HERNANDEZ his Miranda rights and HERNANDEZ agreed to waive his

Miranda rights and speak with the officers. During the audio recorded interview, HERNANDEZ stated that he did rob the three smoke shops and liquor store on December 12, 2022, each of which are described above. HERNANDEZ also admitted to robbing ten other locations (listed in Paragraph 14, letters (a) through (j)).

a. HERNANDEZ admitted to shooting a store employee during the Norwalk robbery (paragraph 9(h)) with a pellet gun.

b. HERNANDEZ admitted to owning a firearm (80% style Glock Handgun, 9mm) that was recovered during a Search Warrant at his residence.¹

18. HERNANDEZ was charged by criminal complaint (22-MJ-392) in the Central District of California on January 28, 2022 by U.S. Magistrate Judge Charles F. Eick.

D. ROMO Initially Identified as a Co-Conspirator Based on Warrants Related to HERNANDEZ

19. San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Detective Rob Oakleaf learned the following through his investigation:

a. After serving a search warrant on an Instagram account (<https://www.instagram.com/yallbigtrippin420/>) believed to belong to HERNANDEZ, Detective Oakleaf reviewed video documenting the stolen items taken during the robberies, including the bongs, hookahs, blunt wrappers, cash, and alcohol. Through the background of the video, it appeared that the video was taken at a hotel.

¹ On January 25, 2022, the SBCSD executed a search warrant at HERNANDEZ's residence, 1029 East Artesia Boulevard, Unit 7, Long Beach, California, and recovered an 80% style Glock Handgun.

b. On September 27, 2021, HERNANDEZ was arrested for vandalism. During the incident, HERNANDEZ was with two other subjects - ROMO and J.M.

c. Detective Oakleaf located ROMO's California Identification card (Y1335982). Upon viewing the photograph of ROMO, ROMO appeared to be the same subject in the <https://www.instagram.com/yallbigtrippin420/>. ROMO appeared to be the same subject carrying the AK-47 style rifle in the first three robberies (Hesperia, Adelanto, and Victorville).

20. After obtaining a search warrant on January 26, 2022 for HERNANDEZ's iPhone, Detective Oakleaf reviewed some of the contents within the iPhone and learned the following:

a. Detective Oakleaf reviewed multiple photographs, videos, and messages on the iPhone showing HERNANDEZ and ROMO's involvement in the robberies.

b. Location data on the iPhone captured several locations. December 12, 2021 at 2:54 p.m. through December 13, 2021 at 1:19 a.m. the iPhone's geo located at the Hotel 6 on Cataba Road in Hesperia.

c. There were videos taken on December 13, 2021 at 12:58 a.m. depicting ROMO and HERNANDEZ drinking and smoking on the hood of a vehicle. This was only several hours after the series of robberies on December 12, 2021.

d. On January 27, 2022, Detective Oakleaf contacted the staff at the Motel 6 located at 9757 Cataba Road, Hesperia, California. Detective Oakleaf inquired if HERNANDEZ or ROMO had rented a room on December 12, 2021. The staff indicated that

ROMO had rented a room at the Motel 6 on December 12, 2021 and provided Detective Oakleaf with ROMO's phone number (x2067).

21. On February 1, 2022, ROMO was arrested by the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

E. Post Miranda Interview of ROMO

22. On February 1, 2022, ROMO was interviewed by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Task Force Officer Mark Yzabal and Detective Oakleaf. The officers read ROMO his Miranda rights and ROMO agreed to waive his Miranda rights and speak with the officers. During the audio recorded interview, ROMO stated that he robbed the three smoke shops and liquor store on December 12, 2022, each of which are described above. ROMO admitted to his involvement in additional, all the locations listed in Paragraph 14 (a) through (n).

F. Search Warrant Executed on ROMO Residence Revealed Evidence Linked to the Robberies

23. On January 31, 2022, a search warrant was issued for the residence of 13685 Del Haven Street, Victorville, California. The warrant was authorized by the Honorable Michael Camber, Judge of the Superior Court in San Bernardino County.

24. On January 31, 2022, the search warrant was executed at ROMO's aunt's (M.R.) house. The aunt walked Detective Oakleaf upstairs and showed him where ROMO's bed was located and ROMO's belongings (ROMO shared a bedroom with the aunt's children). ROMO had been staying at the residence for several weeks. The following were some items that recovered:

- a. Crossman AK style BB gun with three magazines

b. Purple "Backwoods" backpack with a bong, a bong mask, and blunt wraps.

c. Purple "Backwoods" Grape backpack

d. Blue Nike low top shoes

e. Black Nike hi top shoes

f. .22 caliber, Heritage Arms revolver

25. The AK-style BB gun is consistent with the rifle used during the four robberies (Robbery 1 through Robbery 4).

26. The purple "Backwoods" grape flavor backpack was worn by ROMO during the first three robberies (Robbery 1 through Robbery 3).

27. The Bong mask appeared to be stolen during the Victorville Smoke shop robbery (Robbery 2).

28. The .22 Caliber revolver located in ROMO's backpack was seen in several of ROMO's Instagram videos.

G. Smoke Shops and Liquor Store Sells Goods in and Affecting Interstate Commerce

29. On January 26, 2022, I telephonically spoke with the owner, J.A., of VV Smoke Shop (the location of Robbery 3). J.A. stated that they accept credit card payments at the store, and they place orders with and receive goods/inventory from two vendors that are located outside the state of California (Florida and Minnesota).

30. On January 26, 2022, I telephonically spoke with employee (N.S.). N.S. stated that Sky Liquor Store (the location of Robbery 4) accepts credit and debit cards. The liquor store also sells beer (Coors and Corona) as well as cigarettes.

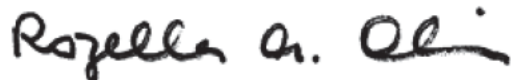
V. CONCLUSION

31. For all the reasons described above, there is probable cause to believe that ROMO has committed violations of 18 U.S.C. § 1951(a) (Interference with Commerce by Robbery) as described above.

/S/

SA Stephen J. May
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Attested to by the applicant in
accordance with the requirements
of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by
telephone on this 5th day of
May, 2022.



UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE